

# Pare (Door Lintels) of Human Figure Composition

By GILBERT ARCHEY

The simplest compositional arrangement seen in Maori wood carving is a succession of human figures standing in alternate full-face and profile attitude, *tiki* and *manaia*. Attention was drawn to this by the writer in 1936 (Archey, 1936, p. 57), and illustrations were later given (Archey, 1955, pp. 8-16) of the further development of this simple rhythm into quite involved patterns which included double spirals (*pitau*) as well as *tiki* and *manaia*.

In certain door-lintels (*pare*) this primary succession had already advanced from the simple, unvaried repetition that we see on house thresholds or canoe washstrakes to a decorative design that had gained a measure of variety through the different sizes of the figure elements and their changing pose of limbs and bodies.

This condition (Fig. 1) is made the basis of the present paper which will present some dozen and a half *pare* compositions created from human figures alone, some naturalistic, others stylized. They do not include double spirals; but it may be remarked by way of reservation that spirals themselves are held by the writer to be human figure derivatives, a decorative form drawn out or abstracted from profile faces in strongly curved stylization (Archey, 1933, p. 175). This paper then invites you to look at certain Maori carvings as we endeavour to identify these elements and comment upon their compositional arrangement.

## I

### Simple Figure Sequence

Structurally the door lintel is a panel carrying a group of figures or figure-derivatives standing above a plain basal portion. The *pare* of our first illustration (Fig. 1) is as simple an example as we know of



Text Fig. 1

1. *Pare* composition of a row of figures alternately full-face (*tiki*) and profile (*manaia*).

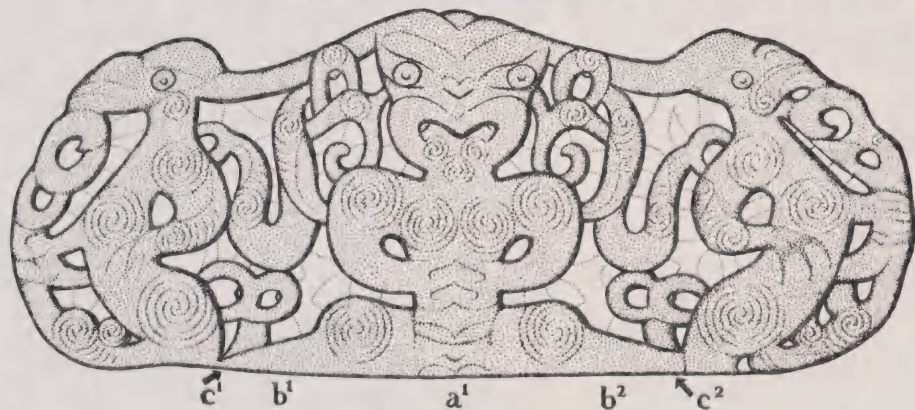
this arrangement. Its basal bar is undecorated except for elements of a head or face at either end. The disposition of the figures, which seems to be the basis for all *pare* compositions, comprises: a central full-face figure or *tiki* (a); on either side of it a succession of *manaia*: *tiki:manaia* ( $b^1$ ,  $b^2$ ), in that order; terminally on each side a pair of *manaia* figures in conflict or embrace ( $c^1$ ,  $c^2$ ). The lower edge of the basal bar is nearly straight, its upper edge gently arched; the upper margin of the *pare* itself is embayed between the central *tiki* and the terminal paired *manaia*. A photograph of this *pare* appears on Plate 36

The other lintels presented in this brief review exhibit variations on this simple order. I have placed the designs in such series or groups as has seemed appropriate; the difficulty of devising an 'inevitable' classification arises from the fact that the carvers were individuals, and versatile to a degree in their handling of a common theme.

## II

### Stylized Tiki and Manaia in Complex Designs

In text-figure 2 we present a *pare* we have previously illustrated in conjunction with Fig. 1 (Archey, 1955, pl. III). On that occasion



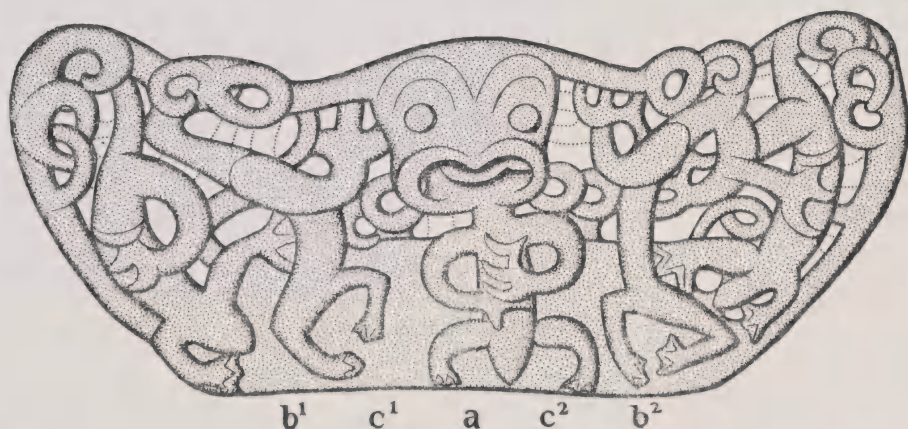
Text Fig. 2

2. *Pare* with figures in strongly curved stylization.

the connecting chocks between the actual figures were eliminated; here Miss Dorothy Kempin whom I again thank for her clear drawings for my papers, has emphasized the figures at the expense of the connections, so that both can be seen, in an effect the carver envisaged if he did not precisely achieve it. In this *pare* the three figures which in Fig. 1 stand between the central *tiki* and the terminal paired *manaia* are reduced to one on each side ( $b^1$ ,  $b^2$ ): its sweeping, curved body however and its large profile head with amply curled upper lip, adequately fill the space. It is assisted in this 'space-filling' function by the terminal *manaia* heads of the base ( $c^1$ ,  $c^2$ ) projecting upwards into the figure-design area. Despite these variations, this *pare*, a carving obtained in Sydney many years ago by the donor, the late Mr. John Kenderdine, is clearly a rendering or variant of the design of Fig. 1. Although our carver here devoted himself to his design of curves and loops, he nowhere departed from the organic elements proper to a *pare*; indeed it was by pliant wielding of them that he achieved his purpose, the effect of which can be seen in the photographic illustration, Plate 36 B.



In text-fig. 3 and Plate 37 A, a *pare* from Thornton's Bay, Coromandel, the central *tiki* (a) is again flanked by a single figure on each side ( $b^1$ ,  $b^2$ ); the heads of the base again project into the design area ( $c^1$ ,  $c^2$ ), but they now face *inwards* to meet the mouth of the central figure. The carver of this *pare* had little need for connecting

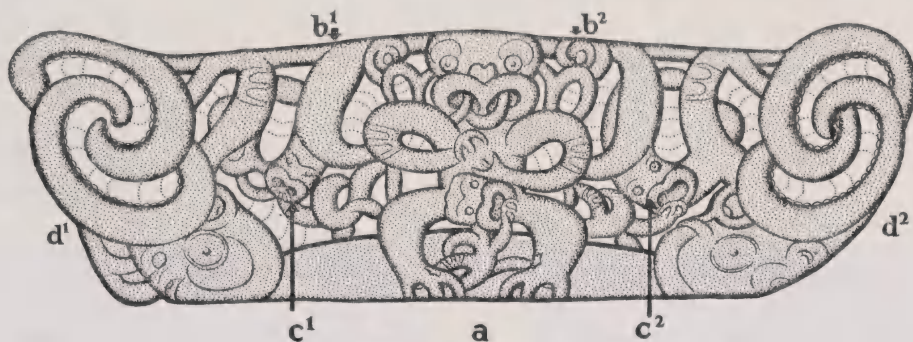


Text Fig. 3

3. *Pare* with figures in more angular stylization.

blocks of non-organic nature; he achieved almost every detail of his pierced design by an adroit linking of the bodies and limbs of the figures.

In text-figure 4 and in Plate 37 B we observe a central and sub-lateral elements similar to those of Plate 36, B, i.e. a central *tiki* (a)



Text Fig. 4

4. *Pare* with curved stylization of *tiki* and *manaia* and terminal motive of strongly developed interlocking mouths.

flanked by a pair of U-looped *manaia* ( $b^1$ ,  $b^2$ ). An additional element is a small *tiki* with contorted body ( $c^1$ ,  $c^2$ ) placed just above the base of the *pare*; its head, full-face, appears on the bottom of the loop of the main *manaia*.

The terminal feature of this *pare* (Fig. 4,  $d^1$ ,  $d^2$ ) is a striking decorative form — a large double-loop or incipient double-spiral, both loops provided with a row of teeth. The lower of these two loops is clearly the mouth of the large profile face at either end of the plain

basal bar of the *pare*. This great double-loop is, both by its position and its form, the counterpart of the *manaia* in combat (or in embrace?) that is the more customary end-feature of a door-lintel composition. Or, to put it another way, the opposed *manaia* that usually constitute the end-feature of these *pare* compositions here appear as a much expanded representation or stylization of their interlocking mouths. It is most unusual to find the heads of the base forming part of the terminal *manaia* combat; it shows us the freedom the artist could claim to modify the content of the normal *pare* figure-group in favour of his design concept.

### III

#### Design Grouping of Tiki

In giving attention now to a handsomely carved *pare* from the East Coast (Plate 38, A) we return to a composition of figures that are for the most part naturalistic; we present it, however, as the prototype of a second series of designs in *stylized* versions of the human body. In the former series the intermediate figures are in a row, in line with the central *tiki* and the terminal *manaia*; in this second group they are irregularly disposed, sometimes becoming an involved medley.

The base, as yet unornamented except for a few tentative loops on one side, carries at each end a finely turned curled-lip *manaia* face in pierced carving. The central figure of the *pare* itself is boldly naturalistic. The outline of the upper margin of the lintel, embayed more deeply than in text-figure 1, extends boldly outward around the lateral margins. This border is excellently expressed by the inevitable paired *manaia*, and here I feel I must dwell for a moment on an admirable example of Maori design competence. It is not only that the figures are each carved in appropriate strength for their respective function — the inner bold, to hold the composition together; the outer diminished, to give lightness to the margin. Real merit prevails too in the sweeping continuity of body and limbs in two movements, confluent and countervailing; figure 5 expresses their formal essence.

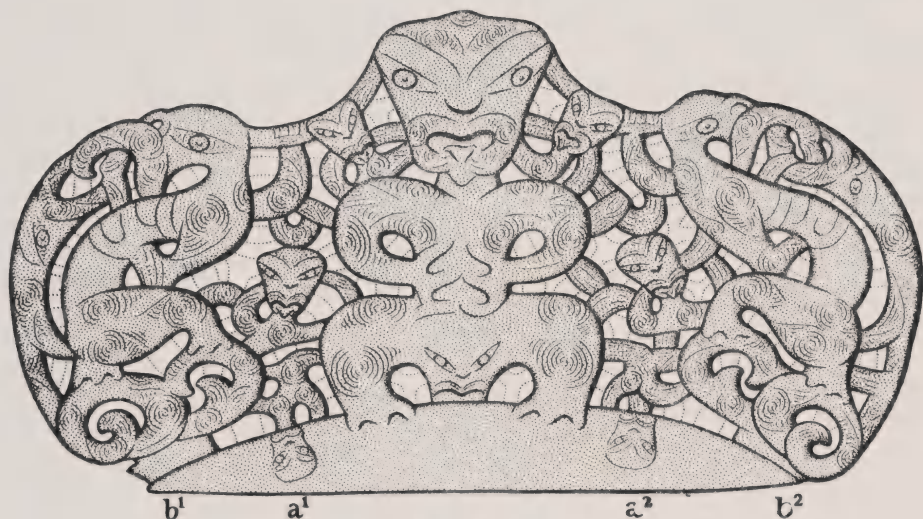


Text Fig. 5

5. Design motive of terminal *manaia* of East Coast *pare* of Plate III, A.

On each side, between the central figure and the marginal *manaia* three naturalistic female figures are presented in active attitudes; their size and arrangement are such as to reduce considerably the need for connecting bars, and this together with their very light surface ornament, leaves the figures themselves in full prominence. A small detail for passing note is the looping of an arm of one around the leg of another. In the balanced arrangement of faces and the easy movement of body and limbs, these figures fill the required space appropriately and demonstrate how satisfactory a design the Maori carver could contrive by a composition of natural figures alone.





Text Fig. 6

6. A figure-composition with tracery of *tiki* and powerfully developed terminal *manaia*.

In our next illustration (Fig. 6) (cf. Pl. 38, B) this three-figure composition appears to be replaced by an evenly spaced tracery of pierced carving; nevertheless the same three figures are there. Their naturalistic faces alone are obvious, their bodies and limbs being more slender and blending with the now more prominent connecting bars. They are not really easy to disentangle, though we are often helped here by the simple chevron pattern on the connections.

At first sight it might be thought that there are only two figures on each side; the third face however appears upside-down on the otherwise plain base of the *pare*, clearly carved on the right and only roughly outlined so far on the left.

The pleasing all-over evenness in texture of this lintel derives from a similar fairly strong surface ornament having been applied to the larger figures (the central *tiki* and paired *manaia*), as well as to the tracery. The main figures however are not thereby subordinated or even subdued. They stand or carry themselves boldly, with the same vigour of expression that we saw in Plate 38, A. In both these lintels the outer marginal element, which from its slenderness might be thought to be an eel or a snake (not known in New Zealand), possesses clearly indicated arms extending downward from a typical spiral-decorated shoulder-boss and across to meet the body of its 'adversary'. In fact these arms are very similar in form in both *manaia* shown on this Plate.

As a final comment on this fine British Museum example of Maori art we note the bold treatment of the *manaia* faces that project upward from either end of the lintel base (Fig. 6,  $b^1$ ,  $b^2$ ). Expanded as they are, they provide a firm base for the sub-terminal *manaia* to stand upon; with their sweeping loops they also have their own definite place in the design as a whole.

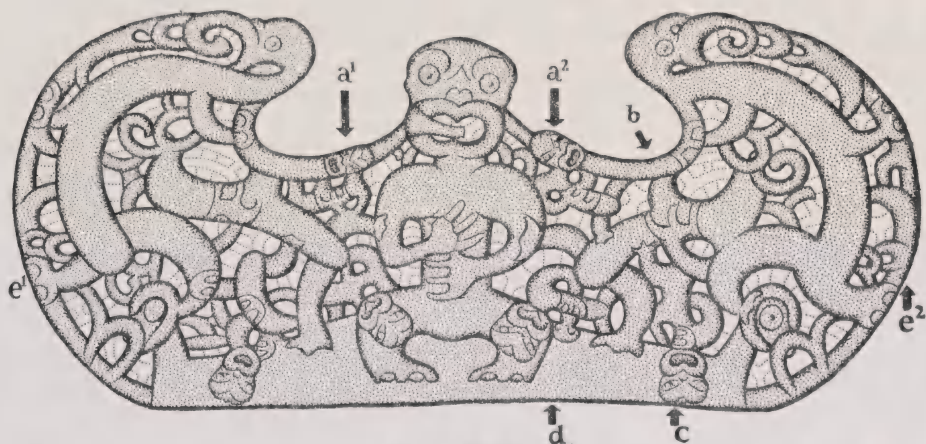
As we now have the general composition of this type of *pare* clearly in mind it would be merely repetitive to describe further examples in detail; points of comparison and of general interest will therefore be sufficient comment on the illustrations which follow.

Captain William Richardson's gift of 1807 to the Peabody Museum of Salem (Pl. 39, A) shows the limbs of all the figures comprising the *pare* (even where they are still naturalistic) expressed as undoubted design elements with a very clear realization of compositional relationship. The elongated horizontal oval made of the arm of the sub-terminal *manaia* is one such element; its strongly curved leg is another. We see the sub-lateral (tracery) *manaia* now drawn out into two strong curves, the inner (leg) disposed around the arm of the central figure, the outer (head and arm) following the strong backward curve of the leg of the sub-terminal *manaia*. The surface pattern picks up the same theme with an elegance of scrolls and spirals that express both the form and the movement of the limbs they ornament.

The carvers of the national centennial house at Waitangi (see Phillipps, 1955, p. 264, fig. 153) have carried this expedient of distinct emphasis, or over-emphasis, a stage further to produce a window lintel that is almost rectangular both in outward form and inner design. The *manaia* flanking the central tiki are stiffly jointed and dominate the composition, while above them the strongly developed arms we have just noted are replaced by horizontally placed figures, armless and with a long curved neck and three-toed foot. They could be birds, a form that, whether or not it occurred in pre-European times, has become familiar in present day interpretations.

The horizontal arm we noted above is part of a tendency to throw the curve of the terminal paired *manaia* upward and backward, a movement accompanied by a deeper embayment of the upper margin of the lintel. In Pl. 40, B, this tendency grows into such an emphatic extension of the main sub-terminal *manaia* as to confer almost a new shape on the *pare* as a whole, and in Pl. 40, A this is even more strongly marked.

In text-figure 7, a fine *pare* in the Liverpool Museum we can identify the same three tracery figures that we saw in the *pare* of



Text Fig. 7

7. Of same composition as text-figure 6 but with all figures more slender and elongated; the upper margin deeply embayed.

Plate 38, i.e. an upper small figure ( $a^1$ ,  $a^2$ ), its full face lying along the embayed upper margin; a middle figure ( $b$ ), an elongated *manaia* extending from the curved back of the sub-terminal *manaia* nearly to the elbow of the main central *tiki*; and a third ( $c$ ) upside-down with its



full-face head on the base of the *pare*. There is also a fourth figure (d), its head upside-down on the knee of the main *tiki*, its body lying horizontally below the legs of the large *manaia* b; while for good measure there is a reduced *manaia* face (e), two loops only, passing across from the terminal to the sub-terminal *manaia*.

The carver of this *pare* undoubtedly enjoyed himself; but with all his enthusiasm for intricacies of pattern he nowhere abandoned the natural forms that comprised its elements, and we cannot help but feel that they had meaning for him, be that meaning symbolic of some idea or event or merely commemorative of persons. Indeed in all six *pare* of this group we see this same theme of natural forms, human figures, rendered in variations of different degrees of complexity, but always retaining an unbroken harmony of content and form.

#### IV

#### Hauraki and Te Puke

Although the Hauraki *pare* (text-figure 8; Pl. 41, B) is so elegant and the Te Puke lintel (Pl. 41, A) so rugged, they are to be taken together, for each consists of a row of figures, i.e. five naturalistic images with the customary paired *manaia* at either end. The squat heavily decorated form of the Te Puke figures undoubtedly impairs the attempted energy of their attitudes, especially in comparison with the *joie de vivre* of the Hauraki ballet, while the effect of the heavy connecting tracery of the former falls far short of the elegance of the interlocking loop pattern of the latter.

It is the tracery of Hauraki that constitutes its importance in respect to the origin and relationship of typical elements of Maori carving, especially of the double spiral. This however we have previously discussed at some length (Archey, 1955, p. 14). Here, we will do no more than note the compositional relationship between the Hauraki lintel's frieze of dancing figures set against a background tracery of interlocking loops Fig 8, and the static figures standing



Text Fig. 8

8. Composition of a row of naturalistic figures in active attitudes against a light tracery of interlocking loops. *Figure rhythm.*

upright between expanded and smoothly spinning double spirals in another group of *pare* (i.e. Arawa and East Coast Fig. 9). In content they are the same; they differ only in design emphasis, this being on the figures in Hauraki and on the spirals in Arawa.

A five-figure *pare* of this group, "said to have been secured from a swamp in the Auckland Province" is illustrated by Phillipps (1955, p. 241, Fig. 140). It is unfortunate that we do not know its precise locality; in style it is close to Hauraki. Both in the posture of its figures and in its somewhat crude carving style it presents more of the vigour of the *haka* than of the dancing elegance of the Hauraki *pare*. The Hauraki lintel was the model for the carvers of the main doorway *pare* of the national centennial *whare runanga* erected at Waitangi in 1939. This also is illustrated by Phillipps (loc. cit. p. 263, fig. 152).



Text Fig. 9

9. *Spiral rhythm*: upright figures alternating with double spirals.

The question does perhaps arise as to whether the Hauraki *pare* is properly included in a paper on 'door lintels of human figure composition'. The Te Puke lintel is composed, as are the others discussed up to this point, of human figures alone, with connecting pieces of purely mechanical function. In Hauraki, such mechanical or neutral elements are replaced by interlocking loops of abstract human figure derivation and possibly of some symbolic significance. We may, however, be making rather much of classificatory relationship. I feel sure that a carver with individuality and enterprise would not have allowed his inventiveness to be constrained by subservience to a "sealed pattern".

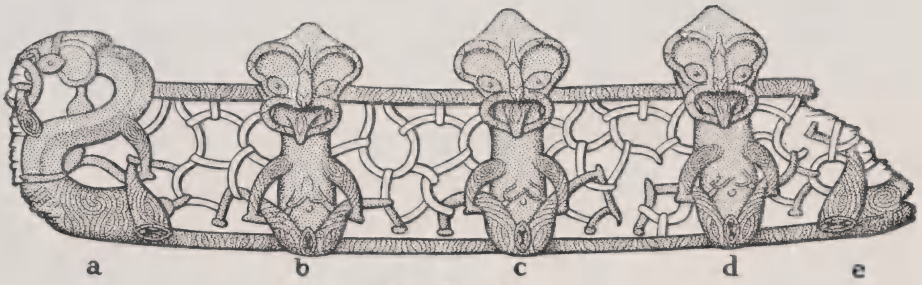
## V

### Taranaki Designs

We next present two Taranaki *pare* which may also include something more than the human form in their content and meaning (Pl. 42, A, B).

We can agree that the figures and the end *manaia* in these designs are the counterpart of those in the compositions already discussed. But, we may ask, are the evenly repeated loops between the figures in 42, A, and the somewhat irregular loops of 42, B, merely space-filling background or are they of anthropomorphic or other natural derivation? A close examination of Plate 42, B and of text-figure 10





Text Fig. 10

10. Taranaki *pare* of upright figures and connecting loops.



Text Fig. 10a

10a. Taranaki *pare*: figures in active attitude, with background of alternate "chain-loops" and single spirals.

will throw some light on the question by disclosing two separate elements here.

In the front-facing figure marked (b), the arms and the wide-spread legs end in a crudely represented hand or foot. We can also identify the hand of the terminal *manaia* (a), and also its foot, although in the case of the feet we have to follow an extra limb-member to reach them. There seem to be similar extra lengths in the left leg of (c) and particularly of (d). Usually, though not invariably, the thighs only of these legs are surface-decorated.

The tracery loops above these limbs have no appearance of being either legs or arms; moreover they are decorated with a simple uniform pattern.

If then we accept this distinction, we can tentatively interpret the regularly looped background of Plate 42, A, as a space-filling design, a mechanical decoration devoid of symbolism.\* We could also apply

\*A newly-discovered *pare* from Waitara (Text-figure 10a) has timed its appearance nicely to comment on the interpretation given above. Its composition is a row of figures in the Taranaki manner moderately stylized and with faces and bodies in alternate attitudes. Typical of Taranaki is the restriction of surface decoration to the face and the proximal limb members.

Its background tracery comprises two separate designs, i.e. a single spiral in one area alternates with chain loops in the other. The chain loops are somewhat in the manner of those in the small Waitara *pare* shown in plate 43, A. In composition this new *pare* resembles Hauraki (Pl. 41, B), i.e. a succession of figures against a tracery background; in style of carving it is typical Taranaki, but with distinct individuality in its background of single spirals alternating with a pattern of loops. Here we see the expression of a *tohunga's* own personal design concept.

this interpretation to the simplified design of a small *pare* (Pl. 43, A) from Waitara *pa*, Taranaki, discovered by the late Mr. Thomas Prichard, father of Judge Ivor Prichard who presented it to the Auckland Museum. We may find further support for this identification in the like composition (but not decorative detail) of a *pare* of about the same size from Oruarangi deposited in the Museum by the finder, Mr. C. G. Murdoch (Pl. 43, B).

In both of these there is a central mask. In the Waitara specimen it follows the typical Taranaki face-rendering, widening considerably across the eyebrows, and with the eye-sockets originally containing a centre peg to hold the *paua* shell inlay and to represent the pupil. In the Oruarangi specimen (43, B) the face form is as in the Hauraki lintel, i.e. only slightly widened across the eyes and with deep sockets to hold an entire *paua* shell. The terminal figure of Oruarangi has a convex eye as in Te Puke (Pl. 41, A), while there is a general resemblance in the much simplified Waitara terminal *manaia* to profiles in the Dominion Museum Taranaki *pare* shown in Pl. 43, C. A further detail to be noted is that the space-filling in the Waitara lintel is of typical Taranaki loops, while the corresponding area in the Oruarangi *pare* carries scroll detail similar to that in the great Hauraki carving. Furthermore, in each *pare* this pattern is divided by a horizontal bar, as in the Taranaki lintel of Plate 42, A.

These several resemblances and differences are not cited merely as a catalogue of variant detail; they have a significance in that they reveal two small *pare* from widely separated localities exhibiting, not only the same simplification of general design, but also the well established characteristics shared, or possessed separately, by the Hauraki and Taranaki schools of Maori carving.

In drawing attention previously to these regional style relationships (Archey, 1933, p. 218) I tentatively suggested that they might connote a Tainui canoe area distribution; it is interesting to note these further occurrences of obviously related but not identical styles at nearly the extreme points of the area occupied by Tainui descendants.

Taranaki however has another string to its bow, a composition of curved, entwined human figures in a continuous running design (Pl. 43, C). The bodies are undecorated but the upper part of the limbs and parts of the face are ornamented as in the *pare* shown in Plate 42. Not to be outdone, Kaipara, another Tainui area, orders the human form in the same way, though we know of this only from certain *pou* or vertical house posts. (Archey, 1933, pl. 41.)

## VI

### Sui Generis

The freedom or licence our carver permitted himself to stretch the human form when it suited his design is well shown in text-figure 11, a *pare* in the collection of Mrs. H. G. Beasley. It will be seen that in one figure it is the arms that are drawn out, while in two others it is the body itself. I forbear to identify the two latter either as seals or as flying birds. In this lintel the figures function both mechanically and in design as a structural framework for the surrounding tracery. We recall the similar central support-beam figure surrounded by tracery in *taurapa*, the canoe stern-post.





Text Fig. 11

11. *Pare* composition of much elongated figures and limbs.

Plate 44, A, exhibits a design of this nature reduced to almost its simplest terms and very neatly expressed. A rectangle contains the central figure; on either side a beam (an elongated human body), at first angular, sweeps evenly outward to reach and support the lightly tilted head: a disposal of limbs with a pair of inwardly directed *manaia* as close supporters for the central figure comprise a tracery contained easily within the pleasantly curved margins. In either way, structurally or aesthetically (the same thing, really), it is satisfying.

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Text Fig. 12

12. *Pare* with stylized limbs forming a "chevron" pattern.

'Almost simplest terms' we said a moment ago; the qualification 'almost' becomes clearly necessary when we look at the Kaitaia lintel (Fig. 12). Its form is clearly that of a *pare* (Skinner, 1921): it has the almost inevitable plain base, central figure, curved upper margin and terminal *manaia*. And with what we have been seeing of bodies and limbs contorted, compressed, drawn out and extended, we should have little difficulty in recognizing the chevrons as limbs. They are hinted at in the arms of the Hauraki carving; they are seen clearly as limb conventions in the 'chevron pendants' (Archey, 1933, p. 215). The Kaitaia lintel has been very fully discussed (Skinner, 1921a, 1921b; Archey, 1933, 1934); here I will add but one word — to ask you to observe (Plate 44, C) the assurance and maturity of this outstanding concept of abstract art.

Plate 44, B, a *pare* in the Dominion Museum, presents us with still another independent or individual art concept. The central figure becomes only a face, and terminally there are full-faces as in Pl. 44, A, instead of *manaia*. The body belonging to the terminal head fits into the outer of the two loops that make the *pare's* unusual sub-terminal device. The outer of these loops is probably a body — a limb can be seen extending backward from it; the inner is possibly the head or face usually seen at either end of the *pare* base. It is from Manukorihi *pa*, Waitara; in the reduction of natural forms to a central full-face and terminal *manaia* it recalls the Prichard *pare* (Pl. 43, A) also from Waitara. We draw attention to the enlarged interlocking loops of Plate 37, B and text-figure 4, for somewhat similar expanded terminal loops.

## VII

## Summary

It seems hardly necessary to add much by way of general discussion because the carvings themselves have revealed their relationship to one another. Briefly, the foregoing review shows these *pare* as sharing a standard composition of a central human figure, supported on each side by one to three others of possibly lesser status, and a terminal feature of paired profile figures. The latter could be *manaia* in combat, in embrace, or no more than a design device to close the series. In one group the figures are normally posed in alternate attitudes either full-face and profile (Pl. 36) or all full-face with bodies and heads turned or tilted successively to right and left (Hauraki lintel, Pl. 41).

In another series of these figure-compositions the participants are not placed in a row but form a medley of position and posture (Plates 38 to 40); it is interesting to find quite naturalistic versions of both the single line grouping and of the medley; this we suggest is significant for our understanding of Maori carving patterns as a local, autonomous development, through individual design enterprise.

Only two *pare* in these first two groups are localized and we can make no suggestion as to an area of distribution for them. We are better placed in this respect with the remaining groups, though we have only two localities, Hauraki and Te Puke, for the somewhat similar naturalistic figure *pare*. The Hauraki Plains and the Taranaki localities for other carvings of obviously related style may be tokens of Tainui tribal connections.

If, in conclusion, I repeat what I have said elsewhere more than once, it is to observe, even to emphasize, that the more one examines Maori carving—in the figures that are its content, in its structural framework, in the firm purpose of its designs and the ingenuity with which figures are made pliable to that purpose—the more one is impressed by the Maori carver as a mature master of design. This stands out even above the technical proficiency with which he manipulated his complex and varied design concepts in wood, and also won them, when he wished to, out of stone.

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B

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A

A. Rotorua. Auckland Museum (No. 202).

B. Locality unknown; purchased in Sydney. Auckland Museum; (9758);  
presented John Kenderdine.

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A

B

- A. Thorntons Bay, near Thames; recovered from a swamp. Auckland Museum (18681).
- B. From a house formerly at Te Hauke, Hawkes Bay. Dominion Museum photo.



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B

A. East Coast, North Island. Auckland Museum (164).

B. Locality unknown. British Museum, Sir George Grey, 1854.

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A

B

A. Locality unknown. Peabody Museum of Salem (E.5501), presented by Captain Wm. Richardson in 1807. (Dodge, E. S., 1941. *The New Zealand Maori Collection in the Peabody Museum of Salem*. Salem, Peabody Museum).

B. Locality and origin of photograph unknown.





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A

B

A. Mr. W. J. Phillipps advises that this was carved by Tene Waitere of the Anaha school of carving, Lake Okataina. The present whereabouts of the carving unknown. Photo: Dominion Museum.

B. Locality unknown. Liverpool Public Museum. (R.I.30).

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A

B

A. Te Puke. Auckland Museum (2024). Presented by Sir Frank Mappin.

B. Patetonga, Hauraki Plains. Auckland Museum (6189).



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A

B

A. Te Kawau, north of Awakino, Auckland Museum (6087).

B. Taranaki, Canterbury Museum.

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A

B

C

A. Waitara, Taranaki. Auckland Museum (33737). Presented by Judge Ivor Prichard.

B. Oruarangi, Hauraki Plains. Recovered from a swamp by Mr. C. G. Murdoch; deposited in Auckland Museum (33309).

C. Waitara Swamp, Taranaki. Dominion Museum (4657).

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B

C

- A. Locality unknown: formerly in collection of Augustus Hamilton at Napier. Illustrated, but with no information, *Maori Art*, p. 131. Dominion Museum.
- B. From a swamp, Manukorihi pa, Waitara. Dominion Museum.
- C. *Pare*, recovered from a swamp near Kaitaia. Auckland Museum (6341).